

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /058 W
-----181951Z 065074 /64

R 181656Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2983
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: FR, PINT
SUBJECT: 77TH RADICAL SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS

SUMMARY: AT THE CONCLUSION OF A BOISTEROUS THREE-DAY CONVENTION, THE RADICAL SOCIALIST (RS) PARTY ELECTED JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER TO THE PARTY PRESIDENCY, A POST THAT HE HAS HELD TWICE PREVIOUSLY. HIS ELECTION OVER THE ONLY OTHER CANDIDATE, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT EDGAR FAURE, OSTENSIBLY REPRESENTS A VICTORY OF "PRO-GISCARD" OVER "PRO-CHIRAC" FACTIONS WITHIN THE PARTY BUT THE CLOSENESS OF THE VOTE AND THE ABNORMALLY HIGH NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS INDICATE THAT FACTIONAL DIVISIONS ARE FAR FROM RESOLVED. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SERVAN-SCHREIBER WILL TRY TO USE THE RS PARTY PRESIDENCY AS A BASE FROM WHICH TO CONTINUE HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DOMINANCE WITHIN THE MAJORITY OF THE RPR AND ITS LEADER JACQUES CHIRAC. MOREOVER, JJSS'S RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS REFLECT AN ATTEMPT TO MOVE THE RS AWAY
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FROM ITS HITHERTO FIRM SUPPORT OF GISCARD AND PRIME MINISTER BARRE, BUT JJSS WILL ENCOUNTER CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION FROM OTHER SENIOR RS PARTY OFFICIALS SHOULD HE PERSIST IN THIS COURSE OF ACTION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RADICAL SOCIALIST (RS) PARTY CONGRESS, HELD IN PARIS MAY 13-15, WAS THE FIRST PLENARY MEETING OF PARTY

OFFICIALS SINCE THE MARCH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. POLITICAL SPEECHES AND DEBATES FOCUSED ON THE ELECTION OF A NEW PARTY PRESIDENT, AN EVENT WHICH EFFECTIVELY SERVED AS A SURROGATE FOR DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF THE PARTY. THERE WERE TWO CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENCY: JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY HEADED THE PARTY FROM 1971 TO 1975, AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT EDGAR FAURE, A PROMINENT RADICAL PARTY MEMBER IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC MORE RECENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GAULLIST (RPR) PARTY, WHO HAD REJOINED THE RS PARTY THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE CONVENTION WITH THE EXPRESSED INTENTION OF PLAYING AN "IMPORTANT ROLE" IN THE PARTY.

2. OSTENSIBLY THE ELECTION WAS A TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN PRO-GISCARD (JJSS) AND PRO-CHIRAC (FAURE) FACTIONS WITHIN THE PARTY, WITH EACH CANDIDATE SUPPORTED BY A CLAUQUE OF VOCAL AND OFTEN BOISTEROUS BOOSTERS WHO FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED SPEECHES WITH APPLAUSE AND CATCALLS. DESPITE FAURE'S CONSIDERABLE ORATORICAL SKILLS, WHICH ENABLED HIM TO TURN AN INITIALLY HOSTILE AUDIENCE INTO AN APPLAUDING ONE, AND A LAST-MINUTE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WAS WITHDRAWING FROM HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE RPR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY GROUP, FAURE WAS UNABLE TO OVERCOME THE SUSPICIONS OF MANY DELEGATES THAT HE WAS A GAULLIST "TROJAN HORSE" WHO WOULD ALLOW THE INTERESTS OF THE RS TO BE SACRIFICED TO THOSE OF CHIRAC AND THE RPR. ON THE OTHER HAND SUPPORT FOR SCHREIBER WAS ALSO MIXED. MANY PARTY MEMBERS, RECALLING HIS PREVIOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HEAVY-HANDED DIRECTION OF THE PARTY, WERE WORRIED THAT HE WOULD USE THE PARTY PRESIDENCY AS A BASE FROM WHICH TO LAUNCH HIS OWN PERSONAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. THE FINAL TALLY (JJSS 465, FAURE 340, 210 ABSTENTIONS OR BLANK BALLOTS) ATTESTED TO THE DEGREE OF DISTRUST THAT MANY DELEGATES FELT TOWARDS BOTH CANDIDATES.

3. CORRIDOR CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY DOMINATED THE CONVENTION, AND CONSEQUENTLY VERY LITTLE OTHER PARTY BUSINESS WAS ACCOMPLISHED. THE FINAL PARTY DECLARATION, ADOPTED WITHOUT OPPOSITION, WAS A SIMPLE REPETITION OF FAMILIAR RS POSITIONS ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, EUROPEAN UNITY, REGIONALISM, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FISCAL EQUALITY. ONE OF THE FEW BRIGHT NOTES OF THE CONGRESS WAS THE RE-INTEGRATION INTO THE RS OF A SMALL CENTER REPUBLICAN FACTION LED BY FORMER MAYOR OF NANTES ANDRE MORICE, A GROUP WHICH HAD SPLIT WITH THE RADICAL PARTY IN 1956 OVER THE ISSUE OF ALGERIA.

4. COMMENT: SERVAN-SCHREIBER'S MANDATE FROM THE PARTY
IS NOT STRONG. MANY DELEGATES WHO VOTED FOR HIM, IN-

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CLUDING SENIOR PARTY OFFICIALS, DID SO RELUCTANTLY AND
PRINCIPALLY IN OPPOSITION TO FAURE'S CANDIDACY. JJSS'S
POST-ELECTION STATEMENT, "20 YEARS IS ENOUGH" (AN OBVIOUS
REFERENCE TO THE GAULLISTS), AND HIS RECENT ABSTENTION
ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VOTE ON THE BARRE PLAN BIS
MEASURES, INDICATE HIS DESIRE TO MOVE THE RS AWAY FROM
ITS HITHERTO FIRM SUPPORT OF GISCARD'S AND BARRE'S
POLICIES. BECAUSE OF HIS PERSONAL STATURE HE WILL HAVE
NO TROUBLE FINDING PUBLIC FORUMS FOR EXPRESSING HIS
VIEWS. HOWEVER, HE WILL FIND IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO
OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF PARTY POLICY-MAKERS, MANY OF WHOM
ARE CONVINCED OF THE NECESSITY OF MAINTAINING CLOSE TIES
WITH THE MAJORITY. GIVEN THE EXISTENCE OF A SIG-
NIFICANT PRO-CHIRAC RS FACTION, AND THE FACT THAT THE
OTHER MAJORITY PARTIES APPEAR TO BE MOVING TOWARD AN
ACCOMMODATION WITH THE RPR, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR JJSS
TO ORIENT THE RS TOWARD EVEN A LIMITED OPPOSITION STANCE.
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THE RE-EMERGENCE OF JJSS IN A POSITION OF PROMINENCE WILL
KEEP THE RS IN THE PUBLIC LIMELIGHT, BUT HIS ELECTION HAS
LEFT UNRESOLVED A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS, NOT THE LEAST OF
WHICH ARE THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL PARTY COHESION AND
THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF THE PARTY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SOCIALISM, PARTY LINE, POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARIS14795
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770177-0196
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770544/aaaablns.tel
Line Count: 181
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 26cee390-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2470322
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: 77TH RADICAL SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS SUMMARY: AT THE CONCLUSION OF A BOISTEROUS THREE-DAY CONVENTION, THE RADICAL SOCIALIST (RS) PARTY ELECT
TAGS: PINT, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/26cee390-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009